

Opening Statement of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander S. Vindman

Before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

November 19, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for the opportunity to address the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence with respect to the activities relating to Ukraine and my role in the events under investigation.

Background

I have dedicated my entire professional life to the United States of America.

For more than two decades, it has been my honor to serve as an officer in the United States Army. As an infantry officer, I served multiple overseas tours, including South Korea and Germany, and I was deployed to Iraq for combat operations.

Since 2008, I have been a Foreign Area Officer specializing in European and Eurasian politico-military affairs. I served in the United States embassies in Kiev, Ukraine and Moscow, Russia.

In Washington, D.C., I was a politico-military affairs officer for Russia for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff where I drafted the Armed Forces' global campaign plan to counter Russian aggression and Russian malign influence. In July 2018, I was asked to serve at the White House's National Security Council.

At the NSC I am the principal advisor to the National Security Advisor and the President on Ukraine and the other countries in my portfolio. My role at the NSC is to develop, coordinate, and implement plans and policies to manage the full range of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic national security issues for the countries in my portfolio. My core function is to coordinate policy with departments and agencies partners.

The Committee has heard from many of my colleagues about the strategic importance of Ukraine as a bulwark against Russian aggression. It is important to note that our country's policy of supporting Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, promoting Ukrainian prosperity, and strengthening a free and democratic Ukraine, as a counter to Russian aggression, has been a consistent, bi-partisan foreign policy objective and strategy across various administrations, both Democrat

and Republican, and that President Zelenskyy's election, in April 2019, created an unprecedented opportunity to realize our strategic objectives.

Relevant Events

In the Spring of 2019, I became aware of two disruptive actors—primarily Ukraine's then-Prosecutor General Yuri Lutsenko and former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, President Trump's personal attorney—promoting false information that undermined the United States' Ukraine policy. The NSC and its inter-agency partners, including the State Department, grew increasingly concerned about the impact that such information was having on our country's ability to achieve our national security objectives.

April 21, 2019: President Trump Calls Ukraine President Zelenskyy

On April 21, 2019, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected President of Ukraine in a landslide victory on a unity, reform, and anti-corruption platform. President Trump called President Zelenskyy on April 21, 2019, to congratulate him for his victory. I was the staff officer who produced the call materials and was one of the staff officers who listened to the call. The call was positive and President Trump expressed his desire to work with President Zelenskyy and extended an invitation to visit the White House.

May 2019: Inauguration Delegation Goes to Ukraine

In May, I attended the inauguration of President Zelenskyy as part of the Presidential delegation led by Secretary Perry. Following the visit, the members of the delegation provided President Trump a debriefing offering a positive assessment of President Zelenskyy and his team. After this debriefing, President Trump signed a congratulatory letter to President Zelenskyy and extended an invitation to visit the White House.

July 10, 2019: Danylyuk Visit

On July 10, 2019, Oleksandr Danylyuk, then Ukraine's National Security Advisor, visited Washington, D.C. for a meeting with National Security Advisor Bolton. Ambassadors Volker and Sondland and Secretary Rick Perry also attended the meeting. I attended the meeting with Dr. Hill.

We fully anticipated the Ukrainians would raise the issue of a meeting between the two presidents. Ambassador Bolton cut the meeting short when Ambassador Sondland started to speak about the requirement that Ukraine deliver specific investigations in order to secure the meeting with President Trump.

Following this meeting, there was a short debriefing during which Amb. Sondland emphasized the importance of Ukraine delivering the investigations into the 2016 election, the Bidens, and Burisma. I stated to Ambassador Sondland that this was inappropriate and had nothing to do with national security. Dr. Hill also asserted his comments were improper. Following the meeting Dr. Hill and I had agreed to report the incident to the NSC's lead counsel, Mr. John Eisenberg.

July 25, 2019: Parliamentary Election Call

On July 21, 2019, President Zelenskyy's party won parliamentary elections in another landslide victory. The NSC proposed that President Trump call President Zelenskyy to congratulate him.

On July 25, 2019, the call occurred. I listened in on the call in the Situation Room with White House colleagues.

I was concerned by the call, what I heard was improper, and I reported my concerns to Mr. Eisenberg. It is improper for the President of the United States to demand a foreign government investigate a U.S. citizen and political opponent. It was also clear that if Ukraine pursued an investigation into the 2016 election, the Bidens, and Burisma, it would be interpreted as a partisan play. This would undoubtedly result in Ukraine losing bipartisan support, undermine U.S. national security, and advance Russia's strategic objectives in the region.

I want to emphasize to the Committee that when I reported my concerns -- on July 10, relating to Ambassador Sondland, and on July 25, relating to the President -- I did so out of a sense of duty. I privately reported my concerns, in official channels, to the proper authorities in the chain of command. My intent was to raise these concerns because they had significant national security implications for our country.

I never thought I would be sitting here testifying in front of this committee and the American public, about my actions. When I reported my concerns, my only thought was to act properly and to carry out duty. Following each of my reports to Mr. Eisenberg, I immediately returned to work to advance the President's and our

country's foreign policy objectives. I focused on what I have done throughout my career, promoting America's national security interests.

Conclusion

I want to take a moment to recognize the courage of my colleagues who have appeared and are scheduled to appear before this Committee. I want to state that the vile character attacks on these distinguished and honorable public servants is reprehensible. It is natural to disagree and engage in spirited debate, this has been our custom since the time of our Founding Fathers, but we are better than callow and cowardly attacks.

The uniform I wear today is that of the United States Army. The members of our all-volunteer force are made up of a patchwork of people from all ethnicities, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds who come together under a common oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. We do not serve any particular political party, we serve the nation. I am humbled to come before you today as one of many who serve in the most distinguished and able military in the world. The Army is the only profession I have ever known. As a young man I decided that I wanted to spend my life serving the nation that gave my family refuge from authoritarian oppression, and for the last twenty years it has been an honor to represent and protect this great country.

Next month will mark 40 years since my family arrived in the United States as refugees. When my father was 47 years old he left behind his entire life and the only home he had ever known to start over in the United States so that his three sons could have better, safer lives. His courageous decision inspired a deep sense of gratitude in my brothers and myself and instilled in us a sense of duty and service. All three of us have served or are currently serving in the military. Our collective military service is a special part of our family's story in America.

I also recognize that my simple act of appearing here today, just like the courage of my colleagues who have also truthfully testified before this Committee, would not be tolerated in many places around the world. In Russia, my act of expressing my concerns to the chain of command in an official and private channel would have severe personal and professional repercussions and offering public testimony involving the President would surely cost me my life. I am grateful for my father's brave act of hope 40 years ago and for the privilege of being an American citizen and public servant, where I can live free of fear for mine and my family's safety.

Dad, my sitting here today, in the US Capitol talking to our elected officials is proof that you made the right decision forty years ago to leave the Soviet Union and come here to the United States of America in search of a better life for our family. Do not worry, I will be fine for telling the truth.

Thank you again for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer your questions.